

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) made the following statement on the floor of the House of Representatives regarding the 94th anniversary of the start of the Armenian Genocide.

Costa is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and is an original cosponsor of H. Res. 252, a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide in the United States.

“Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 94th anniversary of the start of the Armenian Genocide, which was the first genocide of the 20th century and sadly, the template for a cycle of genocide that continues to this very day.

“It is, by any reasonable standard, established history that between 1915 and 1923 the Ottoman Empire systematically killed an estimated 1.5 million Armenians and drove hundreds of thousands of others into exile from their ancestral homeland. The record of this atrocity is well documented in the United States Archives and has been universally accepted in the International Association of Genocide Scholars and the broader historical and academic communities.

“This year, our nation has the opportunity to finally recognize the Armenian Genocide as such in the annual commemoration from the White House. Year after year, we have seen the same standard letter from the White House which offers sympathy and apology for the ‘mass killings,’ yet refused to label these events as genocide. However, President Obama made promises during his campaign that he would right this wrong, and recognize the Armenian Genocide. I am hopeful Madam Speaker, we finally escape from being under Turkey’s thumb on this issue. It is vital our nation has a foreign policy that accurately reflects history.

“Despite my optimism, I am told yet again that now is not the right time for our nation to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Two years ago, we were told recognition would hurt our troops fighting in Iraq. Four years ago we were told the same thing. This year, we’re being told that recognizing the Armenian Genocide will hurt American jobs. How? We cannot develop a foreign policy based solely on what other countries want to hear about their past. Should we not recognize the Soviet orchestrated famine which killed millions in the Ukraine? Should we allow Cambodia to rewrite the atrocities committed under the reign of the Khmer Rouge? What if our schools stopped teaching the American Revolution and we stopped

celebrating the Fourth of July because it offended the British? All nations must recognize past events, both good and bad, and learn from it.

“To ensure Congress does not mention or pass the Armenian Genocide resolution, Turkey hires powerful and expensive lobbyists to meet with Members and staff, distort the historical facts, and make veiled threats on what might happen if the Genocide is recognized. For the last twenty years, Turkey has been very successful. I firmly believe that we should work with foreign nations on challenges and mutual interests. However, I do not believe another nation can hold our foreign policy decisions hostage because they do not want to admit to dark periods in their past. It is unacceptable that we continue to allow threats from Turkey to hinder our nation from recognizing a historical fact that has been recognized by historians, scholars, theologians, philosophers, common people, and President Ronald Reagan.

“My district is home to thousands of Armenian-Americans, many who are the sons and daughters of survivors. When I am home, I am often approached in the store or on the street by my Armenian friends asking when our country will honor their parents and finally recognize the genocide. We are quickly approaching the 100th anniversary of the start of the Armenian Genocide, and I am hopeful we do not have to wait until then to bring justice to my Armenian friends and neighbors.

“In closing, Madam Speaker, I will say again, genocide is not something that can simply swept under the rug and forgotten. We need leaders around the world to not only recognize it, but to condemn it so the world can truly say ‘Never Again’. The United States cannot continue its policy of denial regarding the Armenian Genocide, and I encourage passage of H. Res. 252 to recognize the Armenian Genocide in our nation.”